

August 30, 2013

To: Executive Board

Subject: **Emergency Communication Protocol**

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## **Recommendation**

Provide direction to staff related to emergency communications preferences, particularly in the event of a nighttime occurrence.

## **Analysis**

Foothill Transit's Accident Communication Protocols are designed to keep key staff and board members informed of accidents and incidents that happen aboard our buses. These accident and incident notifications are escalated in the communications tree to designated internal contacts depending on several key factors.

## ***Designated Contacts and Reporting Protocol***

Internal accident reporting at the staff level is a multi-departmental responsibility with each department providing information and expertise to best communicate the details of bus accidents and incidents to appropriate staff and board members.

Two departments hold primary responsibilities in accident reporting at Foothill Transit:

- Customer Service and Operations
- Marketing and Communications

Customer Service and Operations (CSO) is the primary point of first contact regarding all accidents and incidents. Operations contractors at both the Arcadia and Pomona Yards are required to report accidents and incidents to CSO staff in a timely and thorough manner.

CSO maintains the flow of information between internal staff and the contractors at the yards. Accident and incident reporting information is broken up into two categories in the Accident/Incident Checklist: Immediate vital information and complete incident information.

Immediate vital information is reported within the first 15 minutes from occurrence and includes the following pieces of information:

- Time of accident or incident
- Bus number and Route number
- Location and direction of bus
- Brief preliminary description of accident/incident

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- Injuries and media presence
- Medical transport and hospital location if applicable

In the 45 minutes following the initial report, more complete and accurate incident information is required:

- Bus operator's name
- Identification of responding authorities
- Number of bus passengers
- Vehicles (and number of occupants) involved
- Contractor staff on scene

This information is given more time for collection and reporting due to field communications limitations. This protocol is supplied to the contractor by CSO. The information submitted is reviewed and categorized by severity. Depending on the severity and visibility of the incident, it is then communicated to the Director of Marketing and Communications as the primary agency spokesperson. It is Marketing and Communications' responsibility to collect incident specifics from CSO and summarize them into a concise and accurate report for distribution to primary Foothill Transit staff and/or the Executive Board.

Incident info is distributed internally to priority Senior Staff. Internal distribution includes:

- Executive Director (Doran Barnes)
- Deputy Executive Director (Kevin McDonald)
- Director of Marketing and Communications (Felicia Friesema)
- Director of Customer Service and Operations (LaShawn Gillespie)
- Safety Compliance Coordinator
- Operations Contract Manager

When media are on the ground at an incident, the Director of Marketing and Communications is to be immediately contacted and informed if it is a photographer and/or reporter. The Director of Marketing and Communications makes an attempt to be on scene.

Communication of accidents and incidents to Foothill Transit staff and board members is categorized into Stage 1 and Stage 2 alert levels. Each level has specific markers that identify the severity of the accident or incident and the individual or individuals who need to receive immediate email or phone communication.

Stage 1 accidents and incidents are determined by the following criteria:

- No medical transport
- No media present
- Local visibility is limited to surface streets during non-peak times

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- Minor vehicle damage
- Resolution, and potential coach transfers and clean up take less than 45 minutes

If ALL of the above criteria are met, then the accident or incident is STAGE 1 and only requires CSO to contact the Director of Marketing and Communications, who then distributes the report to internal staff via email.

Stage 2 accidents and incidents are typically determined by the following criteria:

- Medical transport requested/required and provided
- Media on scene or above scene in aircraft
- Highly visible on major thoroughfares (i.e. 10 FWY) during peak times in either direction
- Major vehicle damage and/or visible fire or smoke
- Significant criminal activity on board or near bus stops
- Resolution and potential coach transfers and clean up taking a substantial period of time in a high visibility zone

If ANY of the above criteria are met, then the accident or incident is STAGE 2 and requires phone or in-person communication with key internal staff and notification to the Executive Board.

In the event of a fatality, immediate phone communication with both staff and board is required. At present, if the fatality occurs past 10:00 p.m. and before 6:00 a.m., email notification of board members has been considered acceptable, with follow up verbal communication with members of the Executive Board typically taking place at the beginning of the following day.

It should be noted that since coach operators are employees of Foothill Transit's operations and maintenance contractors and not directly employed by Foothill Transit, accident investigation details that could be considered personnel matters are subject to employer/employee privacy constraints. Additionally, accident investigation is the responsibility of the operations contractor and the specific details of these investigations are made available to Foothill Transit's management to the extent possible as stipulated in our operating agreements. Some details of accident investigation done in coordination with responding authorities may remain confidential until a complete report can be provided to the operations and maintenance contractors. Only those accident/incident details that are not subject to an employer/employee confidentiality arrangement may be released to Foothill Transit's management team.

*Direction is requested from the Board regarding this current practice of accident notification. Is email notification for all incidents appropriate? Would telephone contact be preferred? Should the notification vary depending on the time of day?*

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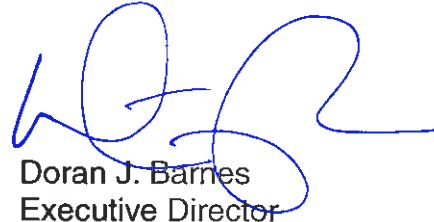
**Fiscal Impact**

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

Sincerely,



Felicia Friesema  
Director of Marketing and Communications



Doran J. Barnes  
Executive Director